

Those that will be making health care decisions for the American people on the Independent Payment Advisory Board, IPAB, will never appear on a ballot. The American people will never be able to hire or fire those making medical decisions on their behalf. Is that fair? Is that democratic? Is that what America is all about?

Mr. Speaker, this need not be a partisan issue. The American people deserve an effective, efficient Federal Government—a government that works for them and not the other way around.

I fear that as the government continues to grow and Obamacare is fully implemented, the consequences of transferring so much power, national treasure, and control to the Federal Government will be felt widely, personally, and painfully.

In the meantime, it is the duty of this Congress to vigorously oversee the Federal agencies, and root out those political appointees and bureaucrats who've abused their positions and violated the trust of the American people.

SAFETY NEEDS OF CHILDREN AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the horrific tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, where 20 children were murdered, the issue of keeping children safe has been on the minds of all Americans. Since this tragedy occurred in a school, districts and States have, understandably, focused conversations on preventing and responding to violent crime that occurs in the school building itself. However, protecting children will require much more than preventing an outside intruder from committing acts of violence against students or a good emergency response plan to deal with an event. We need to recognize that violence—or the fear of violence—against children does not begin or end at the schoolhouse door. That's why I've devoted this month to introduce legislation that focuses on the safety needs of children as a national priority.

First, I introduced legislation to establish the minimum safety standards to prevent abusive seclusion and restraint practices in schools across the country. The Keeping All Students Safe Act would protect schoolchildren from inappropriate uses of seclusion and restraints and provide school personnel with the necessary tools, training, and support to ensure the safety of all students and school personnel. These practices are, at best, cruel and, at worst, deadly. They continue to be used on children across the country.

In Indiana, an 8-year-old girl with Down syndrome had her shoes duct-taped painfully to her ankles because she refused to put her shoes on. In North Carolina, a 14-year-old boy with a traumatic brain injury was confined inside a cardboard box as a form of timeout. In some cases, children have even died from improper restraints and

seclusion. My bill also would stop these abusive practices, but safety shouldn't stop at the schoolhouse door.

Investigations conducted by the Government Accountability Office, at my request, in 2007 and 2008 found that private and public residential programs, including therapeutic boarding schools, wilderness camps, boot camps, and behavior modification facilities are not always run in a safe manner. Recently, the Tampa Bay Times confirmed that problems of abuse and neglect continue, with stories of children being bruised, bloodied, and choked into unconsciousness at these programs, all in the name of discipline. More horrific stories of child abuse, including deaths in some cases, have been documented in seven States' residential programs in just the past 2 years.

Last week, I introduced the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act, a bill that would set basic health and safety standards the State would need to adopt to enforce and protect teens from physical, mental, and sexual abuse in these programs. It would also create easily accessible information for parents about the safety records of the programs so that parents can make sound decisions about if they want to send their child there or not.

No one disputes that our schools and residential programs must be a safe place for children where they can focus on learning and improving their lives, not fearing for their lives. Though some States have made progress developing policies to protect children from acts of violence, abuse, and neglect, a patchwork of protections, riddled with holes, is not acceptable when it comes to our Nation's children. We cannot sit idly by as incidents of children being abused or killed continues to occur.

Today, I'm introducing legislation that will prevent registered sex offenders and criminals convicted of crimes against children from working at schools. The Protecting Students from Sexual and Violent Predators Act would require public schools to conduct comprehensive background checks on any employee, using State criminal and child abuse registries and the FBI's fingerprint database. It would also prohibit school districts from hiring or retaining anyone who has been convicted of certain violent crimes, including crimes against children, crimes involving rape or sexual assault, and child pornography.

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Mr. Speaker, keeping our children safe isn't a partisan issue; it's a moral obligation. This Congress must do more to protect our children. One way Congress can immediately help to ensure that students and schools have the support needed to address all aspects of violence is through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Through a bipartisan rewrite of the Nation's education law, we can ensure that schools and students

have the necessary support to provide key nonacademic services essential for students to succeed in a safe and healthy learning environment.

In the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Democrats will be fighting for these critical services, including other measures to promote safety, such as school services for violence prevention activities, bullying and harassment prevention, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, and programs to prepare for and respond to natural disasters and emergencies in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, on my last point, my thoughts continue to be with the victims and families of all those who have suffered and continue to suffer from the terrible tragedy that took place in Oklahoma earlier this week. We are just amazed and honor all of the efforts of school staff, teachers, and parents trying to get children out of harm's way, and our heart goes out to those who were unsuccessful. I hope that Congress can support these communities in healing in every possible way. As always, keeping kids safe requires the coordinated efforts of children, principals, superintendents, community partners, and parents.

And protecting children from violence and freeing students to learn and better their lives means ensuring that states, districts, schools and communities have the resources and supports needed to implement evidence-based approaches that are tailored to the unique needs of children in that area.

My bills are only part of the solution, but an important step forward.

We owe it to parents and to the children and to the school officials who follow the rules to consider these bills.

We also owe it to them to send a strong message that people who abuse children or do not do their jobs to keep children safe will face serious consequences.

I hope that this Congress will be able to take an even more comprehensive approach to protect children in our schools and residential programs, and I urge all of my colleagues to support these bills.

NORTHERN ROUTE APPROVAL ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, this week, the House of Representatives is going to vote on a very important piece of legislation that should be unnecessary.

Due to the President's objection—at the insistence of Hollywood and the EPA—a critical piece of North America's energy security puzzle languishes on a desk in the Oval Office while thousands of unemployed workers collect government benefits instead of a paycheck. That is why I cosponsored and am doing all I can to pass H.R. 3, the Keystone pipeline Northern Route Approval Act, a bill that renders the northern route of the pipeline approved for construction, eliminating the need for a Presidential permit.